

December 15, 2011
RE: December 14 Climate-MAP Public Forum

Dear Ms Giannelli-Pratt:

Your presentation was informative and encouraging. I wonder how many attending were actually members of the public rather than government employees or consultants to the planning effort? Was the press present? Better that you suggested that the public use transit to attend the Forum, rather than advising that parking was available at an unstated fee.

I drove to a transit node; overall travel time was more than doubled; I had a hassle with exact change; I got to make a phone call while waiting for the bus; and I had time to read the draft document before arriving. I saved money and had another opportunity to compare our weak, inconvenient system with my better experiences in other cities. If all our transit and Sandag board members and senior staff, would use the system, I'm sure more convenient, competitive service would result. And that's the key—"convenient, competitive with the alternative."

You made a masterstroke to pledge to post all written comments, something that other agencies haven't done. That deserves special commendation. To use and not abuse the opportunity, I want to visit briefly only the two points I spoke to near the end of the Q&A.

"It's the entire globe that's warming so we're all in this together."

Human activities since the beginning of the industrial revolution are driving global warming beyond the natural limits that have prevailed since before the dawn of humankind. Society is at grievous risk from the anticipated changes. We have disturbed the natural balance of energy of our planet. The net difference is small and mostly due to carbon dioxide emissions and the greenhouse effect, but these problematic greenhouse gases are cumulative and warming is accelerating. We can't expect to be able to reverse what has already been done. Having already exceeded the 350ppm atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration that our best scientific authorities have recommended as a maximum, our goal must be zero additional greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible.

We are all in this together, including the "polluters" and the "deniers." Nevertheless there are powerful forces opposing us who would engage the real problem and take the actions required. Short-term economic interests and their sponsored "deniers" are one of those forces. Ignorance and a lack of respect for science and its methods abound. The press confuses the public and decision-makers by suggesting that facts and truth are merely postures or opinions, while giving equal time to legal-style arguments that at best, only address that part of the data that "makes their case" against human influence

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on global warming. Inadequate government process and hidden incentives and disincentives are two more opposing forces.

Regardless that the City's sphere of direct action is limited, it is important to speak to the wider issue and place the City's effort in the context of the global cooperative endeavor to halt the current rush beyond the tipping-point to a place where the impacts are disruptive beyond our imagination. For those of us who believe, as the Founders did, in the Common Good and in the Future, there is a moral aspect to this endeavor. As an authentic American document the CMAP should reflect this aspect.

Setting the City's effort in the context of the global cooperative endeavor against warming would aid the essential educational effort--which many others spoke to, and could aid the cooperative lobbying effort necessary to secure the required changes at other levels of government. [James Hansen, Director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies](#), in his excellent, popular book [Storms of My Grandchildren](#), has a lot to say about the required public education, as well as good and bad policy alternatives.

The baseline, trajectories, and the time periods studied should be connected to the measures in common use to describe the global targets, e.g., maximum atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide not to exceed 350ppm—which it already has. Referencing the time periods and the time available for positive action before widespread disruptions occur may be difficult, because the impact of positive feedback mechanisms that would accelerate changes has not been given the weight it deserves in some major studies and reports. The recent report at the December 2011 San Francisco meeting of the American Geophysical Union on the increased scale of the release of previously frozen methane in the Russian arctic is an example of positive feedback. Hansen does a good job of explaining these things in his book.

"The True Cost of Transit, Inadequate Government Process, and Hidden incentives and Disincentives"

Two of the items studied overwhelm all others: transportation and transit. The technology is available to address the transportation fuel efficiency issue. Anyone who has recently rented an ordinary car in Europe knows that they get 51mpg now. Political will in Congress is needed to quickly get that technology in widespread use while we work on serious zero-emission vehicles for the long term. Anyway this is not in the City's direct-action sphere.

Transit is in the City's direct-action sphere, and your attempt to evaluate the true costs is admirable and important. You show that when health cost savings are accounted for, a transit system that is used by 20% of commuters has a large negative cost per unit GHG saved. But nowhere in the present system can health cost savings that accrue to the County, to the Feds, and to individuals

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and corporations be redirected to further improve City transit. Big changes in process are required here.

This is the encouraging part. There is no lack of technology; no law of nature stands in the way. We just have to understand what's really at stake, and change the process.

To move things along more quickly, and to accomplish interim improvements, we need members of transit and Sandag boards that are committed to the obvious steps implied by careful studies such as this. Members who state in public meetings that transit is for poor people; or who privately rail against innovations in transportation, will never be part of any solution. Since the public does not elect them to these boards, replacing them might not be so hard to accomplish. The public and non-profits can examine their public record and put the questions to them. When it is clear who has no interest in these issues, ask them to resign to make room for someone who is interested. A public information campaign should be enough to convince the slower thinkers. Then it may be possible to incrementally improve transit to make it more convenient and competitive, while we figure out how to transfer health cost savings to transit.

The fact that fuel is cheap is a big hidden incentive to private autos and a disincentive to support and use transit. Hansen's description of a carbon fee at the source, with a dividend paid directly to individuals is an example of an effective way to raise the cost of fuel while raising the consciousness of the public. A national, or global program would be ideal. But in a County as big as this one, it could be possible to implement locally. As the fee ratchets up, energy consumption of every kind will decrease. Miles traveled in autos will decrease, and demand and use of more convenient, competitive transit will increase.

While drivers transit riders are conscious of the fuel and sales taxes they pay towards highway infrastructure, according to TRIP, County developers get off cheaply paying less than 1/3 of the cost of highway impacts of their projects compared to adjoining counties. Why would that be? Is this another hidden incentive for creating sprawling communities difficult to serve with transit? Is this true in the City? This needs clarification and study.

The bottom line is we need to reach zero GHG emission ASAP.

Respectfully submitted,

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(former Torrey Pines Planning Board Member)